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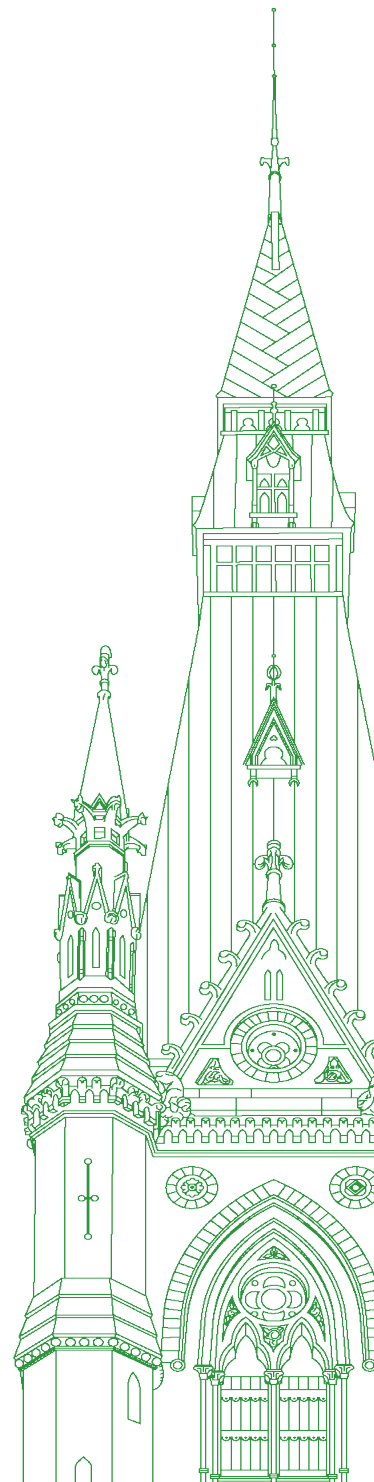
# Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 033**

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Chair: Mr. Sameer Zuberi



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Friday, June 16, 2023

• (1350)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Thank you, everyone, for your patience. We'll be going until 3:30 today and we're going to be adjusting our panel to put all the witnesses together.

This is the 33rd meeting of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today our meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are in person in the room, and participating by Zoom.

For those of you who are testifying, you will have five minutes for your opening statements.

For everyone, please wait until I recognize you. Comments and questions are through the chair.

We have interpretation services. At the bottom of your screen, there's a little globe icon. You can flip between English and French or just listen to the floor, which is without interpretation.

We have, as an individual, Ali Karimi, assistant professor at the University of Calgary, by video conference.

From the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, by video conference, we have Ibrahim Mohebi, president; and Shamim Ahmadi, settlement manager.

As individuals, we have Melissa Kerr Chioyenda, assistant professor, by video conference, and Mohd Rajabi in person.

Thank you for being here, and thank you again, everyone, for your patience.

We're studying the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan.

We'll start off with Mr. Mohd Rajabi, please.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Mohd Rajabi (As an Individual):** Thanks for having me here.

I want to say thanks to Canada for their mission in Afghanistan for peacekeeping. I want to say thanks to the Canadian government for helping the refugees of Afghanistan by bringing them to Canada and helping them out.

Also, I appreciate and thank you guys who have accepted me to come here as a witness and speak about the genocide of the Hazara during 1891 and 1892.

At that time, 62% of the Hazara people were killed and wiped out. A mentality was going on at that time in all of the Hazara society in Afghanistan. In Uruzgan province, almost every single person was killed. Abdur Rahman Khan ordered to bring 6,000 Dur-rani people from the Kandahar district. Then, about 4,000 people from the Ghilzay tribe were brought and resettled in Hazara lands and houses. It was a very tragic situation when it was happening there.

What I'm talking about is mostly based on what my grandmother told me of her eyewitness stories and also from books. There are five different books. I will talk about that later on if somebody wants to know what books there are. There are very well-known history books.

Then, after that, this is what happened during the time of Habibullah Khan and his son. It was slavery time for Hazara people, and about 9,000 women were sold only in Kabul, based on the tax that they paid to the government of Afghanistan at that time. All of those 9,000 women were sold to be slaves. This was only in Kabul, and then this could have been for other big cities in Afghanistan, anywhere in Afghanistan.

The raping, killing and atrocities against Hazara people kept going on until the son of Habibullah Khan died in 1919. From 1891 to 1919, there was no life for Hazara people living in Afghanistan. That caused lots of people to move from Afghanistan to escape the killings to Quetta in Pakistan, and they created another town in Pakistan. Mashhad in Iran is a place where lots of Hazara lived. They all escaped at that time from Afghanistan.

There are lots of atrocities to talk about. Each one of the atrocities is really unbelievable. It's unbelievable that a person could do that to another person.

After that, there was a little bit of a break during Amanullah Khan's reign. He introduced a constitution that everybody should be equal. Hazara people supported him during the civil war. Anyway, he escaped from Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, at a school, a young guy named Abdul Khaliq killed Nadir Khan. Once he killed Nadir Khan, his tribe dominated Afghanistan for another 30 years. Afghanistan then marginalized and discriminated against the Hazara. The discrimination happened all the way up to 1964.

Then, again, there was another break. The people had schools and hospitals open during the mission of NATO in Afghanistan. There was a green light that popped out, but it didn't last too long. The people were jealous because Hazara were very talented people. The kids started going to school, showing up and were in offices. Before, they were not allowed to be anywhere in those kinds of places.

They started suicide bombing inside the gatherings of Hazara society, anywhere from the mosques to the schools and hospitals. They also bombed in the road. When the people were travelling from one place to another, they were taken off and searched if they were Hazara. They were killing those people.

● (1355)

In 1992, during the civil war, there was another attack on Hazara people during the civil war between different warlords. The punishment got to the Hazara people, in a place called Afshar in Kabul. The government and its allied party attacked at that time. It was 1992. I do believe it was February 11-12 of—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rajabi.

I am certain you will be able to share more during the questions and answers. We're going to have ample time for that.

Now we're going to continue on to the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services.

You have five minutes. I encourage you to time yourselves, but I will lean in when your five minutes is concluding.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi (President, Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services):** On behalf of the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, I would like to thank everyone who made this event possible to raise the voices of millions of Hazara victims who have perished and the thousands who continue to suffer systemic persecution.

Mr. Chair, I'm a witness and survivor of the unspoken August 1998 Hazara genocide. This is my personal history. I'm hoping this can be a learning experience for our future generations.

In the afternoon of July 31, 1998, my fiancée and I, along with family and friends, were celebrating our engagement ceremony in the Arezo banquet hall in Mazar-e-Sharif. Midway through our ceremony, only a few family members were left in the banquet hall. I asked my brother why the guests were leaving so early. He replied that the Taliban had taken over the city of Sheberghan, which is 75 miles west of Mazar-e-Sharif. The ceremony ended without the traditional rituals.

A week later, the Taliban invaded the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, shooting on the Hazara people in the streets, farms and alleys, killing thousands just because they were Hazara. They started searching houses for Hazaras. The Taliban knocked on my door. I didn't open it. I heard someone say that nobody is in this house. The Taliban went to my next-door neighbour. Each time they knocked on my door, I jumped over the fence to the next-door neighbour. Finally, my neighbour forced me to leave their house. I headed toward my uncle's house, which was in a rural area of the city. On my

way, I saw hundreds of mutilated dead bodies of Hazaras on the roads and alleys.

I was working as a medical officer for a leprosy control organization and also as a medical doctor at the city hospital. Eventually, I made my way towards my workplace—the city hospital. I saw trucks with cargo containers full of Hazara people. I witnessed the Taliban's brutal act when they dragged a Hazara patient to the back of their pickup while the serum bag was still connected to his veins.

Mr. Chair, I can talk for hours on end about all the bloodshed that I witnessed or about the indifference of non-Hazara civilians, who were throwing stones at Hazaras to prove their loyalty and allegiance to the Taliban.

Why is it important to recognize the Hazara genocide of 1891-93? It's because the perpetual persecution and systemic discrimination that the Hazara have endured is the after-effect of the 1891-93 genocide committed by the dictator Abdur Rahman. The Hazara have been considered secondary citizens and have been refugees in their own homeland. They have been targeted in their mosques, gyms, schools, markets and on roads and highways.

The recognition of the 1891-93 Hazara genocide won't revive those who were brutally slaughtered, but it will help to change the social and psychological view and belief towards the Hazara. The recognition of the Hazara genocide will not heal our grandparents' wounds, but it will ensure our grandchildren feel valued and can live with dignity.

We humbly request that this committee—and through it, the Canadian Parliament—formally recognize the 1891-93 ethnic cleansing perpetrated against the Hazara as a genocide and designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1400)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that statement.

We'll go to your colleague for the remaining time of a minute and a half, please.

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi (Settlement Manager, Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services):** Mr. Chair and honourable committee members, today I'm very grateful for your time and the opportunity to share my untold experiences as a survivor of many systemic attacks on my people.

One day around noon while I was in my classroom in Pakistan, the air darkened and the city was overtaken by an eerie silence. My school announced there was an attack on Hazaras in mosque. My heart was shaken and shattered. I was praying that the school would let us go home and praying to find my family alive.

When I got home, my mother was crying and my father wasn't home. We found out that two of our relatives died in that mosque attack. I ran to the street. Our neighbours were crying. One was slapping her face upon learning her husband had perished, too. I decided to go to find my two little brothers. I ran to the hospital where injured Hazaras were taken. I searched every bed to find my brothers, but couldn't find anyone. I was lost among the mutilated, bloody bodies. Every single innocent and lifeless face I saw that day remains with me until this day.

The attacks on Hazaras continued in many places—at schools, on school buses, in the streets and at workplaces. The darkness and hopelessness remained in place in that city. My only question was, “What is our crime?”

Mr. Chair, I returned to Afghanistan in 2011 as an adult, where I experienced renewed mistreatment as a second-class citizen within my own homeland.

There, as a student at the faculty of science, one day during the finals, the guard entered the classroom and started violently beating Hazara students with the point of a Kalashnikov for cheating. Hazara boys in my class begged to have their pockets searched, but the guards wouldn't listen. I was sweating. My paper got wet and other students were falling from their chairs out of fear.

The systemic attacks on my people and the profoundly traumatic impacts on my generation have deeply wounded my soul, those of our grandparents and many generations since the late 1800s genocide.

Mr. Chair, my question was never answered by anyone. What is our crime, to be perpetually condemned to such pain and suffering? I hope this committee does not leave our people's request unanswered—the Hazaras who are looking at us to end this suffering, inherited and passed on from generation to generation. Our future generations deserve to live a life free of persecution.

Mr. Chair and honourable committee members, your decision to respond positively to the ask of Hazara Canadians for the recognition of our genocide is truly the only first step towards closure and healing.

Thank you.

● (1405)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ahmadi.

We're now going to continue with Mr. Karimi for five minutes, please.

**Dr. Ali Karimi (Assistant Professor, University of Calgary, As an Individual):** Thank you.

Good afternoon. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Karimi, we're having challenges with interpretation. Your connection is a little bit weak.

We'll let IT work with Mr. Karimi to fix that. I'm going to go now to Ms. Kerr Chiovenda.

You have five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chiovenda (Assistant Professor, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to talk a little bit about and reiterate the devastation that the 1891-93 campaigns by Abdur Rahman had on the Hazara society in Afghanistan. My research in Afghanistan, which I've undertaken since 2009, focused on Hazara collective trauma and the Hazara community at large.

One of the things I found was that at the centre of this collective trauma was this event in 1891-93 and the actions of Abdur Rahman. While there had been loss of Hazara land prior to that, and while of course we've heard about many of the horrific things that have happened to Hazaras since then, this event set the stage for more than 100 years of Hazara persecution within Afghan society.

Really quickly, Abdur Rahman did carry out campaigns against other communities in Afghanistan, but what was particular about the Hazara community was that it was done with an intent to target a specific ethnic group that had specific somatic or racial features and that was a religious minority. There was dehumanizing language, and there were efforts to mobilize not just the army but the entire society. There were civilians who were brought in and were called upon to commit jihad against Hazaras and target them specifically, so this was a very specific event. It targeted the Hazara culture, as well, and the social structure was almost completely destroyed.

I don't want to take too much time, but I want to reiterate several things that point to this being a genocide. Number one, this was a specific group. This was the targeting of a specific group, an ethnic and religious group. There is documentation of this. We see, of course, the killing of huge numbers of Hazaras, the displacement of huge numbers of Hazaras from their land and the enslavement. I think we've already heard the number, more than 62%. This is pretty much the agreed-upon number.

We also saw, however, that there were conditions put in place to bring about the destruction of Hazaras after this. We had Hazara land that was given out to those who assisted in these campaigns and to others, as well, so Hazaras were removed from the land and it was given to other populations in Afghanistan.

We had incredibly high taxation rates put on Hazaras that made it nearly impossible for them to live, and of course we had the enslavement of huge numbers of people. This was also treated as the spoils of war for those who took part in the campaign.

I think it's important to underline that women—this has been brought up—were forced into marriage and raped, both enslaved women and non-enslaved women, so this could also be viewed in the context of genocide as an attempt to prevent the birth of Hazaras. Again, all of this, these events from 1891 to 1893, has set the stage and has led to current Hazara vulnerability and the current risk that Hazaras face of genocide again in Afghanistan. We have the past history of that, and then we have that going forward.

I think it's very important that this time period of 1891 to 1893 and Abdur Rahman's campaigns against Hazaras be recognized as a genocide for all of these reasons.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

• (1410)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kerr Chiovenda, for that testimony.

We're going to try again with Mr. Karimi for five minutes.

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** How about if I turn off my camera and only talk on audio?

**The Chair:** We prefer that you keep your camera on. It's important for interpretation.

Just go ahead, and if there are any challenges, I'll let you know.

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm honoured to be speaking with you about the social and historical aspects of the violence against the Hazara people.

Wars, ethnic cleansing, enslavement and land grabs leave lasting legacies. In Afghanistan, the Hazaras have been the victims of all these forms of violence throughout the modern history of the country. That is why one cannot fully understand their current situation without paying attention to the historical roots of the Afghan ethnic conflicts.

Despite all their suffering, the Afghan state or even people rarely acknowledge what the Hazaras have gone through. In school books and other instruments of propagating official narratives, the Hazaras are either absent or misrepresented.

Allow me to give you one example of this systematic silence.

The Hazaras were enslaved in Afghanistan for centuries for being Shia Muslims, and were sold in bazaars across the region. This inhuman practice continued well into the 20th century. In 1924, finally the state abolished slavery. Despite its long history, there is no book or even an article in any language about the history of the Hazara slavery. When I say the Hazaras have rarely seen other people acknowledge their suffering, I'm not exaggerating. This is why I especially appreciate the work this subcommittee is doing about the human rights of the Hazara people. This means a great deal to us.

Afghanistan is a very diverse country, with many ethnic groups, languages and sects. In the west, this is not very well known. These diverse people, as you can imagine, were not always very good at getting along with each other. Until the late 19th century, each region of the country had its own states, with kings and mirs. The weaker ones paid tribute to the stronger ones, and that's how they coexisted for centuries. This was, in fact, how political power was practised, not only in central Asia but all over the world, before the invention of the modern state in the 19th century, which introduced novel concepts such as national borders and citizenship.

In the 19th century, the British Empire invaded Afghanistan for the second time. They were worried about the Russian Empire conquering the territory, which was long a buffer zone between the two adversaries. The occupation didn't go well, and they decided to

withdraw their troops and instead help a local ruler conquer the confederation of all independent states and make one central state out of them. They picked Abdur Rahman, an Afghan, for the job, and supported him with money and arms.

The new amir was the head of a state that barely existed. In 1892, he declared the Hazaras non-believers and asked the clergy to issue a fatwa of jihad against them. They did. The fatwa said that every Muslim should kill Hazaras, take their property and enslave their men and women. The amir reserved Hazara land for his fellow Pashtuns only.

This large-scale military mobilization united the diverse ethnic groups behind one cause and solidified the position of the amir as a national leader. I would argue that the genocide of the Hazaras gave birth to Afghanistan as a nation-state. This event is the original story of Afghanistan.

The ongoing targeted attacks on Hazaras are a continuation of that larger history of racial, ethnic and religious war on these people. At least two legal scholars, Mehdi Hakimi and Gregory Stanton, have argued that the targeted attacks on Hazaras in the past two decades meet the definition of the crime of genocide. This is not hard to understand. The UN figures show that between 2017 and 2021, extremist groups attacked Hazara civilian targets 67 times, resulting in 2,458 civilian casualties—756 killed and 1,702 injured. This happened only in four years. They targeted Hazara schools, hospitals, mosques and peaceful demonstrations. Hazaras are not safe anywhere in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, allow me to acknowledge that Afghanistan under the Taliban rule is a no man's land. The Taliban have built a state of terror. In particular, they have denied women all their basic rights. The gender aspect of the current human rights violations in Afghanistan is fairly known—the ethnic aspect, however, not so much. Almost everyone is suffering in Afghanistan, but it is only the Hazaras who are being targeted for their race and ethnicity. This is an important distinction that requires acknowledgement by those involved in the affairs of Afghanistan, such as UN agencies, organizations and diplomatic missions.

Thank you so much.

• (1415)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Karimi.

Now, we're going to go on with our questions from members of different parties, starting with Mr. Viersen from the Conservative Party for seven minutes.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our honourable witnesses for being here.

Mr. Rajabi, I'm going to start with you.

Could you explain a little bit more about the recent history of the Hazara people, say in the last 10 years? How has that looked from 2001 onward, and then in the last year and a half, essentially?

**Mr. Mohd Rajabi:** After the last 10 years.... I'll start from the very beginning. In 2022, there were many explosions and one of them was very tragic. All of them were tragic, but I can mention the three most evident right now.

A gunman came to the door of a school, killed the security guy at the door and then entered the classroom. He began shooting around every single student there between the ages of 15 and 19, kids preparing for the Kankor exam to go to university. After he shot them, he exploded himself inside. They basically blamed the ISIS-K of Afghanistan for that event.

After that, there was another event, where they attacked a women's hospital and killed newborn babies. They killed the women doing the deliveries and then killed all the other women right there at that event also.

There was another one at a girls' school. They were preparing for the Kankor exam again. There was another explosion that happened inside and killed all the girls who wanted to go to university and who had lots of hope for the future.

The situation for Hazara people has never been safe in Afghanistan.

As I just mentioned a few minutes ago, anywhere they started popping out and being educated people.... Before, they didn't want Hazara to be sitting beside the other people right there at the office, but now they have popped out to go as educated persons, to be a minister, a general or a high-ranking officer. That was not accepted by what they call terrorist groups, so they started exploding themselves, killing themselves anywhere, on the road, on the highway, in the mosque, in the school, at the university.

There's a lot of evidence that a lot has happened. There is a register by the people of Afghanistan, by historians, that we can bring up.

Thank you.

• (1420)

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Thank you.

Melissa, you mentioned you were there in 2011. I imagine there's been a significant shift in the last couple of years, but 2011 was a time of relative peace in Afghanistan. Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** Yes, I was there. The bulk of my research was done in 2012 and 2013, but I started going in 2009. Yes, it was relatively peaceful when I was there, but there has been a steady decrease in security for Hazaras over that time, which Mr. Rajabi touched on.

We had probably the first really big mosque bombing targeting Hazaras in 2011, I believe. For a few years, it seemed as though maybe that was an isolated incident, but there was concurrently an increase in targeted attacks of Hazaras, particularly travelling by road between cities and between districts. So when people were in urban centres, they might be relatively safe, but when travelling

through areas particularly where the Taliban had more control, they could potentially be removed from the transportation, whether it was private or public transportation, and, if they were identified as Hazaras, kidnapped and often killed, including children. There were a number of children. One very famous incident included a nine-year-old girl.

So this started ticking up. Then, I think around 2016, we saw a really big uptick in mass killings, suicide bombings and other types of bombings and, in some cases, shootings and attacks not limited to mosques but involving—and Mr. Rajabi got into this as well—civilian targets, soft targets like schools and educational centres, sports centres and the maternity hospital, which, I would like to emphasize, had an incredibly symbolic significance if we're talking about genocide and if we think about killing mothers who were in the act of giving birth and newborn babies being shot and killed face to face. It's quite incredible to think of and, I think, can really make us see what the intent of those carrying out those attacks was.

So there was just a steady increase from then, really, until the Taliban took control. With the Taliban in control, we had a moment of instability. Now there's a different type of danger, I think. A number of large-scale attacks have happened, but I think more important is the fact that everything has been turned on its head.

We've heard the testimony about what has happened in Mazar-e-Sharif. People who very clearly want to exterminate Hazaras now hold the reins of power. For the most part, they haven't acted yet, and they're just placing blame for the attacks that have happened on ISIS and on other groups.

We also see an erosion of Hazara security in other areas, with people being removed from land that was historically theirs, displaced in rural areas and also in cities, and old disputes that date back decades—sometimes even a hundred years—concerning Hazara land that was given out, even back in the 1800s, to other ethnic groups, which Hazaras later managed to reclaim and which is now being taken back by those groups.

The Taliban almost always falls on the side of the group that is not Hazaras, and of course there's no Hazara representation in the Taliban government to capture this.

Yes, the situation is getting quite bad.

• (1425)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We're going to continue on to our next questioner, Ms. Vandenberg from the Liberal Party, for seven minutes.

Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you for your very honest and personal testimony. I know that's not easy to do. I can assure you that it is making a difference and you are being heard.

I know that many of you have talked about the historic situation and the genocide that has happened to the Hazaras in previous centuries, and I understand that acknowledgement of this is something that could be a deterrent in terms of this happening again. This committee has often ended up having to do hearings after genocides have happened. I think that right now we are in a situation where we are perhaps seeing the beginning of another genocide and, perhaps, as legislators, people with power, we may be able to do something to stop it, so this is incredibly important testimony.

I would like to focus on what's happening right now, today.

Mr. Karimi, you mentioned—and I think Ms. Kerr Chioyenda also talked about it—what is happening right now under the Taliban, what happens when the people who are perpetrating the violence are now in power. If I could start with you, Mr. Karimi, you said that in the last decade, say, there have been hundreds killed and thousands injured already. If you could, talk a bit about the current situation today and in the last few years and what your fears are in terms of where this is heading, and then tell us what we can do as legislators to try to make sure this does not happen.

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** I think one way to understand the current situation of the Hazaras under the Taliban is to see how, in the South Asian region in general, Islamic extremism operates. The hatred towards religious minorities such as the Shias, Ahmadiis, Hindus and other minorities who live in Afghanistan and Pakistan is one of the main driving forces for recruitment of these extremist groups. You can't go around saying to another Sunni, "Oh, let's join our group and kill our fellow Sunnis." It's not going to work.

All these madrasas in Afghanistan and Pakistan are recruiting people. They say that there is a jihad going on, that there are non-Muslims like the Hazaras, and that if you kill them, you will go to heaven. You will go to paradise. A lot of these young suicidal men join the Taliban and ISIS because of that.

Right now, the Taliban is acting like a state, and several countries treat them like a state, but what kind of state is it? They have a regiment of suicidal attackers in their army. Any normal army would not have a suicide squad, but they do. In one of the groups, there are 1,500 men ready to commit suicide. These are not states. These are not governments. These are terror organizations, and they operate like terror organizations.

One way they operate, one way they recruit people and fundraise, is through propagating hate. In Pakistan, if you walk into any bookstore, you can pick up books about why Shias are non-Muslim *rafidi*. In these madrasa schools, there are textbooks that test students on this kind of hate. There is a systemic hatred against religious minorities, and the Hazaras—

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Mr. Karimi, I'm really sorry, but I also want to hear from some of the other witnesses, and I have only about a minute and a half left.

Ms. Ahmadi, you haven't said very much, so perhaps I could have you answer that and, if there's time, Ms. Kerr Chioyenda as well.

• (1430)

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi:** Currently, the situation of Hazaras is really critical in Afghanistan, especially with the extremist group of

the Taliban coming to power. I'm extremely worried about the Hazaras right now, at the moment, especially women and young women.

Before, even when there was a government that was supported through the international community, Hazaras were not safe to travel between the smaller cities. They were targeted everywhere. Now that the extremist Taliban is in power, we are more at risk of another genocide.

Even when I was in Kabul University, I experienced so many challenges in my time there as a Hazara. Even people at the university were telling me, "Hide your identity, because your eyebrows are a little bit darker." But how could I hide my facial features? How could I hide my accent and the way I was speaking? I was brought up that way in my family. It was hurting me deeply.

I also witnessed that in the Hazara students' paperwork from the professors at the university, who said that this student was not present at the university during the exam. How could they do that? They were students.

There are so many stories that I can tell you as a person, as an individual, as a Hazara.

I know that this is not my story, and there have been thousands who can tell you. This situation really worries me, under the Taliban government. What will happen to our women, to our young generation, going around and living in that city under the extremists in power? What will happen to our men who work outside? We're very easily recognizable by our facial features.

We have witnessed many attacks in the past 10 years during what we are calling the most stable time in Afghanistan. I'm really worried, and I hope that the committee today hears us and does something for us because the wound and the suffering are unbearable for us. Even being in Canada, we are in between. We are suffering.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ahmadi.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** We are going to continue on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're working as a team today. This committee is extremely important for determining next steps. We have only one meeting left.

People are focusing on what's happening now, but the motion also mentions the genocide carried out from 1891 to 1893. The goal is to demonstrate that that genocide was the precipitating factor leading to the persecution of the Hazara people today. That's what we need to demonstrate.



My question for the witnesses is simple but vitally important for the next steps, in terms of the report we will write.

Mr. Mohebi, were the Hazara people victims of a genocide from 1891 to 1893?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** I'm so sorry. I missed the first part of the question. Can you repeat it?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Were the Hazara people victims of a genocide from 1891 to 1893?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** Actually, this is a historical issue, but as I witness what is going on with the Hazara people right now, in the 21st century, it's because of the after-effect or the consequence of the fatwa or the jihad given by King Abdur Rahman in 1891-93 that they consider the Hazara people as infidels, and they also enslaved the Hazara people and forced them to be displaced. Their lands were given to non-Hazara people. Some of the witnesses also mentioned what happened in Uruzgan province, and the same in Kandahar, which originally was the land of the Hazara people. They were forced to flee the country. Most of them went to Pakistan, but some were not able to cross the border towards the northern parts, which were Russian countries at that time.

Unfortunately, those who were inside the country were all subject to the fatwa or jihad that was decreed by King Abdur Rahman. Mainly, that happened because of the Hazara people belonging to a minority sect of Muslims, which is Shia. That was a very easy tool for King Abdur Rahman to consider the Hazara people as infidels and subject them to genocide as infidels.

Unfortunately, that has given the mentality among the Afghan society that, as secondary citizens, they don't have the rights to live in the country. They are always targeted, even psychologically, which, as some other witnesses also mentioned, made it easier for society to have a recruitment pathway in the south of Asia for the extremists to go and to kill the Hazara people as infidels. That's what made the Hazara people a soft target during the current situation. It's based on the fatwa and the jihad that was given by King Abdur Rahman.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Ahmadi, could you tell us how important it is for Canada to recognize the genocide that was committed from 1891 to 1893?

[*English*]

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi:** It won't heal all our wounds that we have suffered, but it definitely brings a lot of change if Canada recognizes the genocide of Hazaras in Afghanistan. Once the genocide is recognized, it will give us peace of mind that our voices are heard.

When I was a young, little girl, when attacks were happening, even in the news, everything was misinterpreted around the world. The number of people who were killed was misrepresented to the world, and the number of injured people.

This will definitely bring a bit of awareness to the world. If you recognize it, it will bring awareness to the world, and it may change a lot of laws on how to treat even refugees, newcomers to the country. This is the most important thing because when our genocide is not recognized, first of all when we are refugees in another country, we have to be first, as Hazaras, treated as refugees. We don't need another story, an individual story. Once we are Hazaras, we are refugees because we are targeted systematically in Afghanistan and in the neighbouring countries.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Kerr Chioyenda, how certain can we be that the events of 1891 to 1893 can be considered a genocide against the Hazaras?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** I'm completely certain that this was a genocide. It hits all of the marks for the international legal definition of genocide. You clearly have an ethnic and religious group and there are documents from the time period that show they were targeted: the call for jihad against Hazaras because they were Shia. That's one thing.

You have the destruction of the whole or part of the group. Absolutely, this is what happened. If you think about what it means, more than 60% of the population being killed, enslaved or displaced, that absolutely checks that box. You think about the conditions that were made so that this group could not survive. You think about the subsequent giving away of Hazara land, displacement of Hazaras, enslavement of Hazaras and heavy taxation. When I talk about taxation, it seems like something not very important, but I'm talking about a level of taxes specific to Hazaras that made survival impossible.

I keep coming back to the women issue and the issue of rape and forced marriages. This isn't something that is much talked about, for cultural reasons, but this was also a huge problem. The silence that surrounds this is important. We're only just now starting to see, to talk about what it meant that so many of the enslaved Hazaras who were given away as spoils of war were women who were raped and pushed into forced marriages. This also constituted an effort to destroy an ethnic and religious group.

As I said, I have no doubt in my mind that what happened in 1891 to 1893 fulfills the definition of genocide—no doubt whatsoever.

• (1440)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** No, your time is up.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Chair, I just want to take a few seconds to tell you that I can't see you on the Zoom screen, so I had no way of knowing how much time I had left.

I think it's important for people attending via Zoom to have some way of knowing how much time they have left.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their testimony.

**The Chair:** There will be more rounds of questioning.

You're right. Moving forward, I'll proceed in the following way.

[*English*]

I will give a hand signal at 30 seconds.

Mr. Cannings, welcome to the committee. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for convening this meeting on the situation of Hazaras in Afghanistan.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today to provide their testimony.

I'm subbing in for my colleague, MP Heather McPherson, who has been engaging with that Hazara community regularly, especially since the fall of Kabul in August 2021.

Before I begin my questioning, I'd like to read into the record a motion that was circulated by Heather McPherson in regard to a study she would like the committee to conduct in the fall.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** We don't do motions or votes in this committee. It's consensus. There are no motions. It's a consensus committee.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** I'm sorry. I was—

**The Chair:** It is your right to read it in, but it is not the normal culture of this committee to do that.

However, it's your right to read it in.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** I'll read it in anyway, just to put it on the record. It's not to do with this study; it's asking for another one.

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the subcommittee conduct a study of the meaningful implementation of the "Voices at Risk: Canada's Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders", and the human rights impacts of Canada's diplomatic support for Canadian extractive industries abroad; that the subcommittee conducts no fewer than two meetings on this topic; and that the subcommittee reports its findings to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Mr. Chair, I do find this rather inappropriate, given the fact that he's not a regular member of this committee and the fact that this committee is a subcommittee; it's a very special committee. Running roughshod over our normal processes is incredibly inappropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Viersen, normally I would recognize you before you speak, but we'll accept that. You are a vice-chair also.

It's his right to read it in, but it is very much counter to the culture of this committee. We have not seen that in the last several months.

Let us continue in the remaining time we have, as already two and a half minutes have passed.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** That's fine. I apologize. I didn't feel that I was running roughshod over anything. I just wanted to put that on the record, as I was asked to do by Ms. McPherson.

I will continue now with questions. I would like to direct them to the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, and Ms. Ahmadi in particular.

First, could you explain and speak to the experiences of the Hazara community right now in Afghanistan, especially the experience of women and girls, particularly following the Taliban takeover in 2021? What challenges are Hazara women and girls faced with?

• (1445)

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi:** Thank you for your question. It's a very important question you have asked me, regarding the Hazara women in Afghanistan at the moment. Hazara girls, like every other girl there right now, are bound to their homes. They cannot go anywhere. Specifically for Hazara girls, it's very much harder, as they're at risk of being kidnapped and raped for their facial features, for the way they dress and for the way they present themselves in society.

I can give you some examples. When the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, a lot of these women and girls and their families tried to escape across the border to Pakistan. When they were at the border in Pakistan, I was in direct contact with them. We were getting emails, and we were trying to help these people and evacuate them from the border. Unfortunately, the witnesses were telling me that the Taliban were keeping the Hazara women and Hazara people at the border. They were not allowing them to cross the border. Even when the women were wearing burkas, if they had a child who had the facial features of a Hazara, the Taliban would say, "They're Hazara. Stop them", so they were not able to escape the country. They had to remain inside the country. It's really hard to keep the women safe. When they tried to escape the country, they were easily recognized by the Taliban. They are more at risk at this time.

Right now the extremists who are in power are not doing a lot of stuff in the country. They're waiting for the international community to recognize them as a government. My fear is that if they are recognized once, they will start attacking Hazaras. They could very easily start attacking women, kidnapping them and raping them. This is my very big fear at the moment inside Afghanistan for Hazara women.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** I would like to continue with the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, either Ms. Ahmadi or Mr. Mohebi.

Could you please speak to how Canada can better support the Hazara community and the work of organizations like yours to do the good work that you do?

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** Thank you so much.

I think the least the Canadian government and Parliament could do at this moment would be to recognize the genocide of Hazaras that was faced by the Hazara community from 1891 to 1893. That first step of acknowledgment, hopefully globally, would change the socio-psychological approach toward the Hazara people in both the Afghan society as well as the international community. That could bring the concerns and awareness to the international society.

We are hopeful that this would bring safeguards for the protection of Hazaras, who are suffering right now based on that genocide. Based on Abdur Rahman's order, they lost their lands. Right now, in the Behsud district of Wardak province and in Ghazni, the Kuchis are invading there every year during the spring, killing hundreds and displacing thousands of Hazara people with no reason, just because Abdur Rahman said those lands belong not to Hazaras but to Kuchis or non-Hazaras, mainly Pashtuns.

If that genocide is recognized, I am hopeful that there will be a layer of safeguard for the Hazara people, who can be identified based on their facial features. I was a witness in August 1998, when some Uzbek people were killed just because they looked like Hazaras. Hazaras can be killed based on their small eyes and small nose. I hope that the recognition of genocide will stop this atrocity in the future and our children and grandchildren can live with dignity and feel valued.

• (1450)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mohebi.

We're now going to continue to our second round. The order is a bit different from what we started with in the first round.

Now we will have Mr. Ehsassi for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to also thank all the witnesses for their exceptional testimony. No doubt it is difficult, but they have done a superb job in terms of advocacy.

It's very obvious to all of us that the Hazara community in Afghanistan has faced decades upon decades of discrimination and hardship, which obviously started in the late 19th century. I have read reports that indicate that the Hazara community, despite all this hardship, has demonstrated incredible resilience, and there is an emphasis on education within the Hazara community, as well as very progressive views insofar as the role of women is concerned.

I wonder if anyone could speak to these two factors—how the Hazaras community has proven so resilient and how it continues to invest in human capital. Do any of the witnesses want to take that?

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** Thank you very much for the question.

In Afghanistan, it is a well-known fact that Hazara women are better treated by their male family members than are women in other ethnic groups.

In the 1830s—apologies for going back to the 19th century again—the first American—

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** I just want to keep the focus on the modern era. Are there any particular studies that members of the committee

should be privy to and have the opportunity to look at, just so we can highlight these two factors?

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** Yes. Because the Hazaras have a more egalitarian attitude towards women, they allow girls to go school. They allow the female members of the family to go out to work.

In one district of the Ghazni province, there are more high school girls than in the entire province of Helmand, which is a province in which Pashtuns reside. It is a source of resentment also for the terrorist groups that organize attacks and one reason we continue to see attacks on educational institutions. Hazara parents send their—

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** I think we can recognize that fact, but could you possibly, Professor Karimi, provide us with a couple of articles that talk about how the Hazara community does focus on education and does have a more progressive view of the role of women? I think that would be hugely helpful when we prepare our report for this committee.

I have a second question concerning testimony that came up. I can't quite recall who it was—it may have been Ms. Melissa Kerr—but there was talk about the madrasas in Afghanistan. Who is funding those madrasas? Is it foreign governments that are funding those educational institutions that have terrible perspectives on the Hazaras? Who is funding those madrasas in Afghanistan?

It did come up in testimony. Ms. Kerr, was it you?

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** I wasn't the one who mentioned the madrasas.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** I wasn't quite sure. My apologies for that.

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** I apologize. I'm not sure who it was if it wasn't me.

In the relatively recent history, we do know there has been a lot of foreign influence of madrasas from the Gulf region, where I am right now. I think there has been evidence of that.

There is a pretty strong influence from Pakistan, of course. I'm not sure if that's the case in terms of funding. I'm not sure if it's funding so much as ideological and intellectual influence, and then the movement of people who are coming, back and forth, from these very extremist madrasas that have come up in Pakistan and that, I believe, have also been funded in the past from other parts of the world.

That's my sense. I don't know about the current situation—

• (1455)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kerr and Mr. Ehsassi.

Thank you for that round of questioning.

We're going to continue on to Mr. Aboultaif for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thanks to the witnesses. I would like to direct my questions to Mr. Karimi, and if I find another member to weigh in on my questions, we'll go from there.

In order to establish a full understanding of where we go from here, the history of the Hazara community goes back probably hundreds of years. The latest we have is since the 18th century. What we read and understood is that what the community has been going through is nothing but a playbook in recent history and some of the past over what happened to minorities in many regions of the world. Iraq is an example. What happened against the Christian communities and other minorities in Iraq is the most recent, and also what's happening in Afghanistan.

One thing that begs the question over this is, where is the leadership of the community? It's a community of almost 10 million people, as recognized in the world, as we see in the latest numbers. Where is the leadership? Who is speaking on behalf of the community?

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** The Hazaras are very diverse. They are the most diverse ethnic group in Afghanistan. They are Shias. They are Sunnis. They are Ismailis. Recently, there are new Christian converts. Because of this diversity, there is no one single establishment that would be regarded as leadership—for example, one single political party. There are several, and they have different political tendencies.

That has been a weak point for the Hazaras. They don't have one single institution to speak for them, both inside Afghanistan and outside of Afghanistan. There are mostly ad hoc community efforts, like the group you see today here. We organized on our own. We came here just to get somebody to listen to us. That has been one reason why the Hazaras' story is not that well known. When the genocide happened, the Armenian genocide happened almost at the same time, but the Armenian genocide is better known because of the sustained effort by the Armenian community in the west and also in Armenia, but not by the Hazaras.

The number two reason is that the British Empire was directly complicit in the genocide of the Hazaras, because it was very famously Russophobic. They wanted to keep away the Russians. They didn't care much about the cost, the human cost. For example, one reason why in the U.K. the politicians and members of Parliament shy away from the question of genocide is that they don't want to acknowledge their own role in the violence against Hazaras.

These have been some of the reasons why the Hazaras so far have failed in raising their voices on the international stage and attracting attention.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Karimi, thank you.

For the next question, it seems like what we heard from all witnesses was that the genocide call could be around the fact that this community is a Shia community from the Ithna Asheri, who are the ones who believe in the 12th imam, but the community is diverse.

I'm trying to understand one thing. Please help me to do so. The atrocities and persecutions against the community, is that beyond being Shia? Could it be because of the race? Do we call Hazaras "Shia"? We know that it's a mix of Mongols; they were named "Hazaras" because in Persia "*hazara*" meant "thousand"—the thousand soldiers who joined Genghis Khan at some point in history. Help me around this a bit. It seems that the emphasis from all wit-

nesses is that the genocide is just because they are Shia and they are a different sect from the Sunnis under Islam.

• (1500)

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** Was that question directed to me?

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** The question is, could it be the race rather than the religious sect?

**Dr. Ali Karimi:** It definitely was the race. In Afghanistan, religion has always been used as a weapon. It has been weaponized to mobilize people. But the purpose has always been racial. This race and ethnicity conflict has been the key foundation for all of the wars in that country.

Some of the issues you mentioned have been used against the Hazaras, that they are Mongols, that they are not from this country. That is not entirely correct. Hazaras are mostly a Turkic people. Central Asia is a collection of Turkic people, with some Persians and some Arabs even.

Race has been the driving force behind the violence, but with religion for mobilization.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To our witnesses, I just want to say that I think we've demonstrated that there was indeed a genocide against the Hazaras from 1891 to 1893.

Mr. Mohebi and Ms. Ahmadi, you both experienced persecution at different times, nearly a decade apart. I think that goes to show once again that the Hazara people have always been persecuted.

Am I right in saying that?

Ms. Ahmadi, maybe you could answer first.

[*English*]

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi:** Absolutely. As a Hazara, I've always been treated differently. It's very obvious. You can feel it. You can see it. You can hear it.

With my work at the beginning, when the Taliban fell and the newcomers came to Canada from Afghanistan, I was on the hotel side helping these newcomers. The incident happened inside Canada. The Pashtun people were knocking on Hazaras' doors in hotels and telling them, "Be thankful that you're in Canada. If you were not in Canada, I would diminish your race totally, like Abdur Rahman Khan."

We had a meeting with COSTI. We emailed Immigration as well. It was heartbreaking to hear this in a country like Canada from another ethnicity warning our Hazara people. We are very easily recognizable. If we stand among other ethnicities in Afghanistan, we have these Asian facial features. No matter what religion we are, if we are Hazara, it's in our face. No one can hide it. It has existed—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** What you just said is very important. Rest assured that it will be included in the report. If this is happening to you in Canada, we can only imagine what goes on in Afghanistan.

Mr. Mohebi, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** For sure. The atrocities that the Hazara community has suffered have been for centuries. Everybody knows about that.

As I said earlier, that is the outcome or the consequence of the genocide that happened in the 19th century. That gives a socio-psychological view to the non-Hazara society that Hazaras are second-rate citizens, and they are treating them as second-rate citizens. Unfortunately, there was no voice and there was no safeguard for the Hazara community, so it was very easy to target the Hazara people, both the terrorists and also the civilians.

As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, in August 1998, even the civilians, non-Hazara civilians, were throwing stones at Hazaras on the day the Taliban took control of Mazar-e-Sharif. It was to prove their loyalty towards the Taliban. That was just coming off that fatwa, unfortunately, because we were considered infidels. With the punishment of the Hazara people, the civilian society is receiving a reward. That is the most painful for the Hazara communities.

Right now—

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'm sorry to have to interrupt you, but I don't have much time left.

You made me think of another question, Mr. Mohebi.

If the Parliament of Canada, or the Government of Canada, were to recognize the genocide committed against the Hazara people, if this committee wrote that in a report, could it become an example for other parliaments around the world to follow, in Europe or Latin America, for instance? Would it send them a message that they can do the same thing we're doing here?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** The Canadian Parliament has been a leader of democracy in the world and I'm quite sure that, if this initiative is taken by the Parliament of Canada, it will bring an awareness at the global and international level, and a focus on what has happened and what is going on in the Hazara community. I am hopeful that it will bring an international awareness all over the globe, and that the international community will try to recognize the genocide of the Hazara people.

Let us, as a leader of the democratic—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now continue with our next round.

Mr. Cannings, go ahead for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Thank you.

I'm going to turn to Ms. Kerr Chioyenda to talk about refugees for a moment.

The immigration committee, in April of last year, issued a press release calling for the government to implement special immigration measures, like those enacted for Ukrainians fleeing Putin's illegal war, for other regions of the world facing humanitarian crises, such as Afghanistan. Do you agree with such a measure? What impact could this have in the short and long terms, especially for the Hazara community?

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** Yes, I absolutely would agree with a measure such as that.

For those of us who... I did research on Afghanistan, but also with Afghan refugees. We looked to the world's reaction to the war on Ukraine and the welcoming of Ukrainian refugees as the model that should have been applied to conflicts all over the world, and to people who are vulnerable or facing persecution or genocide all over the world.

Something like that would be incredibly important. If there were some acknowledgement, within that, of the particularly vulnerable status that Hazaras have in Afghanistan—and, if I might briefly say, in Pakistan as well; we're focusing on Afghanistan, but it's also important to mention that Hazaras in Pakistan are every bit as much in danger due to the particular social and political situation there—that would provide much-needed protection to an incredibly vulnerable group of people.

Yes, absolutely, I think that would be a very important movement to see.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** I'm wondering whether you could expand on that and share some of the findings from your research on refugees that you think would be important for us to know, as they relate to the Hazara community.

• (1510)

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** I could echo some of what Ms. Ahmadi said. We do see these sorts of tensions between ethnicities, and whatnot.

I think maybe what is more important to focus on is.... I have written a lot of country expert reports for Afghanistan, and particularly for Hazaras who are seeking asylum. Most recently, I've done most of them in the United States, but in past years, I've done a large number for various European countries and for Australia as well. There's an almost complete lack of understanding of the particular vulnerable situation that many categories of people in Afghanistan face. Everybody knows that women are vulnerable, but beyond that, there's not really an understanding. I think the problem of Hazaras as an ethnic and religious minority is first and foremost there.

Some of the interactions I've had, particularly in Europe—because I tend to work much more closely with European immigration officials—as to what's going on, can be quite shocking. Again, something to reference and to show that there has been this recognition would be incredibly important. I think this might bring us back to an acknowledgement of the necessity not only to recognize Hazaras as people in need of protection when it comes to seeking refugee status or asylum, but also to recognize genocide. I think that would be incredibly important here.

That's why I'm so hopeful that this might come out of Canada. Being able to point to a large, very important country like Canada having recognized this and having made this decision, any time you're discussing these sorts of issues or writing these sorts of reports, not just within the context of Canada and Canada refugee issues but also within the United States, Europe, Australia and everywhere else, would have a huge impact.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Thank you, Mr. Cannings.

We're now going to continue on to a quick two-minute round, starting with Mr. Baker.

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

There are people who are perhaps watching at home—some of my constituents perhaps are watching this hearing or are reading about this hearing—who aren't familiar with this and who are learning a lot through your testimony. I'm learning a lot through your testimony. One thing that has been called for is the recognition of the genocide.

I'll turn to anybody who wants to answer this: What would you say to my constituents as to why it's important that we do this? Why is it important that Canada do this?

I have only a couple of minutes, so I'll probably have one person answer that question.

**Mr. Ibrahim Mohebi:** I think the most important thing that it brings up is the awareness of what happened in the past. Also, it will add a layer of protection for this not happening in the future.

As you know, the Hazara people have been suffering for centuries. That is still going on. There's also no hope that it will be stopping soon in the future. Right now, as mentioned earlier, in some areas of Afghanistan, Hazaras are displaced; they were force-

fully displaced by Kuchis. They own the lands of Hazaras during that genocide that happens. Nobody knows about that unless it is those who are connected with the Hazara people living in Afghanistan. That is an ongoing issue.

The main thing this will bring is another layer of safeguard towards the Hazara community to be protected and to not be targeted. Also, it will change the socio-psychological view and the belief of society, to not treat Hazara people as secondary citizens and to treat them equally, the same as other citizens.

• (1515)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Baker, and thank you for joining us today. Welcome to the committee.

Now we'll continue with Mr. Aboultaif for two minutes.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** I have a question for Professor Chioyenda. Again, I'm trying to nail this on the point where, with the fatwas under King Abdur Rahman Khan regarding attacking the Hazara community because they are Shia, even the Taliban has probably done the same. Why can't we say that this is an attack based on race, more or less? The DNA tells us it's a mix between Mongolian and Turkic. Is that a way that you would explain why the community is...because facial recognition tells us otherwise?

**Mrs. Melissa Kerr Chioyenda:** In the case of the Hazaras in Afghanistan, we have a situation where religion, race and ethnicity are inextricably entwined. When you see somebody with facial features that appear to be Hazara, there's this assumption that the person is Shia, whether or not that is the case. We know that there are Sunni Hazaras and there are Christian Hazaras. There are others.

We also know there are other Shia Afghans who have not experienced what Hazaras have experienced. Part of the reason, but not the only reason, is that they are more able to blend into their communities. I've known Shia Pashtuns for years, and only after years understood they were Shia, when they told me this.

Hazaras are at this juncture that causes this real, particular vulnerability. In the time of Abdur Rahman, when he issued these fatwas and called upon this, there is evidence that he also used these religious divisions to his benefit but in the end really attacked the entire Hazara community. Initially, he divided the Shias from the Sunnis and kind of got the Sunnis on his side, but by the end of these two years of war, he was clamping down and attacking, enslaving and killing all of the Hazara community. I think we have to see them as linked.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kerr Chioyenda. That was helpful.

We'll continue to the next round.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have two minutes.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I only have two minutes, which isn't much time.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before the committee today. I think that what we're doing is vital for the future of the Hazara people. We're laying the groundwork for the next steps.

Ms. Ahmadi and Mr. Mohebi, I'd like you to have the last word. If you have anything more to add or if there are aspects of the issue you didn't get to talk about, now is your chance.

[*English*]

**Ms. Shamim Ahmadi:** My last word to the chair, to the committee, would be to please consider acknowledging the genocide of the Hazara people. It will change the situation in Afghanistan. It will change the situation of Hazaras outside of Afghanistan, in Pakistan and in neighbouring countries. It will also change the perspectives of other world leaders on the recognition of the Hazara genocide around the globe if Canada recognizes it.

We believe in the democracy in Canada. We believe in the leaders in Canada who will hear our voices today. You've heard my voice, my story and my struggle, and you also see me—my resilience—and it's not only me. It's all of our community. We are resilient. We are ready to bring change to our community and to the world. Just please end the suffering. Take the initial step to bring the change to our future generations.

• (1520)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ahmadi. That was very eloquently said.

We're going to continue now to our last round, with Mr. Cannings.

Go ahead, please. You have two minutes.

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Thank you.

Mr. Rajabi, I'll allow you two minutes to tell this committee what you think Canada and the Canadian government could do to help the Hazara community around the world, but especially in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Mohd Rajabi:** We all know and believe that Canada is a world leader in democracy and human rights. As we have all said in this session, we believe that genocide has happened in Afghanistan in the past. Discrimination against the Hazaras and exclusion of Hazara society continue to go on.

It would be very nice, very good, and, I will say, it's going to be Canada's duty to recognize the Hazaras genocide in the past and al-

so to recognize that there continues to be an imminent threat against the Hazaras and that it's possible this will happen again.

That's what I would ask—that the Canadian government or the Canadian Parliament recognize the genocide of the Hazaras.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses. On behalf of the committee, thank you for being here, for educating us and for sharing your history and your struggles with everyone here.

To Mr. Rajabi, thanks for being here in person today. Everyone else is here by Zoom.

Ms. Kerr Chiovenda, thanks for joining us. I believe you're in another time zone.

Mr. Karimi, thank you also for joining us by Zoom.

From the Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, Mr. Mohebi and Ms. Ahmadi, thank you both for being here today.

You're free to continue on with your day.

We have a minor element, to pass our budget for this study. Everyone received it on Monday in their email. It's a total of \$7,700 for standard equipment. I'm seeking everybody's approval.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will share with everyone that our report on Tibetan residential schools in China was submitted to the Commons earlier today—at noon or so—so it's public.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** All right.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone, for being here today. Have a great weekend.

[*English*]

We'll see you all next week, our last week in the Commons until the summer.

Again, to all the witnesses, I wish you well; I wish you strength and everything that's good. Thank you for being here.

We're adjourned.







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